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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

REPORT

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SUBJECT Two-Day Strike in the Association for Chemical and Metallurgical Production, Usti nad Labem

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REQUIREMENT

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REFERENCES

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1. On 16 and 17 November 1953, two-thirds of the workers (2,500 or 2,700) in the Association for Chemical and Metallurgical Production at Usti nad Labem failed to show up for work. This unofficial strike had been prepared five or six days beforehand by a few of the workers as a protest against the rise in food prices (eggs, meat, milk, etc.) from the 1st of November and the impossibility of obtaining fats in the Usti district during the previous two weeks. The workers also complained of hunger, as their wages were not sufficient to buy the necessary food at the high prices.
2. In the early afternoon of 16 November, the People's Militia from three factories in Usti (the chemical plant, Schicht¹ and Turbine²), totalling about 300 men, occupied the chemical factory. The People's Militia from the Schicht and Turbine factories were armed with rifles and the platoon leaders with pistols. The action of the People's Militia was controlled by the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (URO) and the Regional Secretariat of the Communist Party in Usti. The Interior Guard (VB) was not present.
3. In the early hours of 17 November, each of the workers who had been absent from the factory the previous day was visited in his home by two of the People's Militia, unarmed. Their task was to convince the workers of the harm they were doing both to the nation and to their dependents by staying away from the factory and hindering the "plan for the future". At the same time, they promised the workers that their wages would be increased on 1 January 1954. No arrests were threatened. Every worker had to guarantee that he would return to work on the 18th and make up for the lost hours by working on the following two Sundays.

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4. Some of the workers were very tough with the Militia and practically threw them out, saying they had had enough of promises. These particular workers were arrested by the Interior Guard during the night of 17 - 18 November and taken off to a forced labor camp at Skrivanci Pole, north of Usti. About fifty workers in all were arrested, including those who had organized the strike.
5. On 18 November, all the remaining workers were back in the factory.

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Comment. The North Bohemian Fat Factory (Severoceske tukovy zavody), formerly the Jiri Schicht factory.

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2. Comment. Not further identified by source.

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